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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000672

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WERNER/SINGH

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TAGS: [IS](#) [KPKO](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PM](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: MGLE01: UN OFFICE VIEWS IMPROVED GOL COOPERATION
IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) On March 3, econoff and eapartment NEA/ELA Deputy Director met with UN Political Officers Imran Riza and Georges Nasr of the office of UNSYG's Personal Representative to Lebanon Geir Pederson. Riza said that the GOL's Joint Security Force (JSF) had modestly increased its presence in southern Lebanon and had been more visible in conducting patrols. Riza welcomed this development, especially in conjunction with the Lebanese army's opening of liaison offices at the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura and with the Ghanaian and Indian battalions. Riza hoped for more cooperation in the future, noting that Geir Pederson had recently met with Defense Minister Elias Murr who assured him that he had ordered the army to stop arms shipments to Hizballah from Syria. Hizballah is maintaining calm along the Blue Line and has not reacted to the increased JSF presence, according to Riza. He added that Hizballah officials told UNIFIL that they consider only the immediate area along the Blue Line to be Hizballah's area of responsibility, not the whole south. End summary.

INCREASED GOL SECURITY PRESENCE

12. (C) In a March 3 meeting, UN Political Officers Imran Riza and Georges Nasr reported that the Lebanese Joint Security Force (JSF) has increased its presence and activity in southern Lebanon. The JSF, a combined Internal Security Forces and Lebanese military police task force under Ministry of Interior control, is now numbering some 400-500 personnel actually deployed in southern Lebanon, according to Riza. The number of JSF personnel has increased slightly in recent months, but is still below its advertised troop level of 1,000. In addition to the modest increase in troop strength, the JSF is also conducting more patrols and demonstrating a greater visibility. Riza estimated that there may be as many as 100 JSF personnel deployed in Naqoura.

13. (C) The up-tick in JSF presence is a positive development following the establishment of JSF and Lebanese army liaison cells co-located with UNIFIL earlier this year. Lebanese army liaison officers are now co-located with UNIFIL staff at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura and at the headquarters of the Ghanaian battalion and the Indian battalion. A Chinese engineering battalion is due to arrive

soon to replace the Ukrainian battalion accused of malfeasance. Riza expressed optimism about these developments but hoped for more GOL cooperation in the future.

14. (C) Riza said that UNSYG Personal Representative to Lebanon Geir Pederson had met with Defense Minister Elias Murr and Lebanese army Chief of Staff Gen. Michel Sleiman regarding reports that the Lebanese army allowed arms shipments from Syria to reach Hizballah. According to Riza, Murr told Pederson that it appeared to have been an "internal transfer." Murr promised Pederson that he has issued instructions that this not happen again. Sleiman claimed the Lebanese military did not observe the arms transfer, but confirmed that he issued orders to prevent another such incident. Riza commented that Hizballah does not need any more weapons. Hizballah has plenty of arms and ammunition to continue its intermittent, low-intensity attacks on Israeli Blue Line positions for a long time. Besides, Riza added, many of Hizballah's attacks in the Sheba'a Farms are more for demonstration of capabilities than any significant military effect.

HIZBALLAH KEEPING QUIET

15. (C) Riza said that Hizballah officials have told him that they have no interest in any fighting along the Blue Line at this time. It was clear that Hizballah had nothing to do with the rocket attack on Kiryat Shemona in late December, he said. Riza sensed that Hizballah had appeared upset that another group had attacked Israel from its territory without seeking permission. Right now, the only Hizballah military activity of note is its ongoing psychological warfare to keep Israeli forces in a state of perpetual alert. Hizballah is making military movements that the Israelis could interpret as preparations for an attack, but then does not carry out the operation, according to Riza. On a side note, Riza added that the water dispute around Ghajar has been quiet this winter. Israeli airspace violations are continuing, but at a slightly reduced level, according to Riza and Nasr.

16. (C) Riza and Nasr noted that Hizballah has not reacted to the increased JSF presence in southern Lebanon. Hizballah officials told UNIFIL that Hizballah's area of responsibility is the immediate border area along the Blue Line, not the whole south. This seemed to imply that Hizballah acknowledges the GOL's right to exercise control over most of southern Lebanon except for the area of the border with Israel and Israeli-occupied territory. Riza also noted that Hizballah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah recently said that security in Southern Lebanon is the responsibility of the government.

FELTMAN